

Jackson Teacher Instructs Second Graders to Send Political Letters to Governor's Office During Instruction Time

***Teacher Misspells Governor's Name, Mistakenly Mails Letters
to the Lt. Governor's Office and Fails to Correct Student Letters***

(Jackson, Miss.) Governor Haley Barbour's Office today complained to Jackson Public School officials about political letters sent to the Governor from second graders at Poindexter Elementary School that contained false information and mistakes and were obviously done at the direction of an unnamed teacher or teachers.

The 12 letters were dated March 31, 2005, and mention the second grade of the Jackson elementary school specifically. Similar language was used in the letters urging the Governor to "fully fund" education and mentioned various teachers and programs the Governor supposedly wants to "get." Governor Barbour has advocated increasing education spending over last year and has not advocated any of the cuts mentioned in the letters. Judging by the letters, the seven and eight year olds were obviously told that their teachers, physical education classes, computers, books and library would be "take(n)."

The letters were incorrectly mailed to the Lt. Governor's Office and had to be forwarded to the Governor's Office. The teacher or teachers failed to check the letters as individual spelling and grammatical errors were not corrected before the letters were sent. The unnamed teacher or teachers who supervised the letter-writing evidently misspelled the Governor's name for students as all 12 letters referred to the Governor's first name as "Hailey."

"One of the things Marsha and I like most is getting letters from Mississippi children. However, it is disappointing to see children used as political pawns in the budget discussion," said Governor Barbour. "What probably should be more disturbing to Poindexter Elementary parents is not just that a teacher frightened second graders with incorrect political information during instruction time, but that the teacher instructed students incorrectly about spelling and failed to correct student grammatical errors before letters were sent. How can students learn if their mistakes are not acknowledged and corrected?" he added.

"Mississippi needs to have an open and honest dialogue about education funding, but we shouldn't allow young children to be dragged into the process."

Governor's Office staff contacted the principal of Poindexter Elementary School, Evan Caine, to inquire about the letters. Mr. Caine hung-up on the staffer.

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